Appendix 2
A guide to involving D/deaf and disabled people
Courtesy of Stories of Access

Accessing the Arts and Culture in post-pandemic Wales

This part of our 'conversation' offers a closer look at the deliberations of our collective that applies a critical access lens to arts and culture offers. It examines a non-exhaustive list of factors on the design of meetings and events that D/deaf and disabled persons will be asked to engage in, reflects how our group's thinking evolved, how we responded to the pandemic, and much more. Despite its obvious limitations, it has the intention to contribute to the discussion and plans for arts and culture organizations in Wales and beyond.

Discussing disability- Do's and don't's

When discussing disability, try not to avoid the conversation because you are afraid of getting things wrong.

It is always better to say "I have no experience talking about this so I'm a bit nervous," or, "I'm afraid to say the wrong thing," or "is it OK if I ask questions because I'm not sure I understand this?" than to ignore a D/deaf and disabled person who is trying to talk to you about their experience. It is advisable to start a conversation and encourage others to openly discuss their needs.

Don't ask intensely personal / medical questions that you wouldn't feel comfortable asking a non-D/deaf and disabled individual that you are equally acquainted with.

Don't ask a D/deaf and disabled person you're working with to do all of the labour required to explain their experience of being D/deaf and disabled or the history of disability activism. Online search engines/ public libraries are your friend, make use of what is available there. Alternatively, hire a D/deaf and disabled person to educate you and pay them fairly for their time.

If you know that you're working with a D/deaf and disabled person, take some time to read up on the topic.

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Do your part to educate yourself and share your knowledge with others in order to help make meeting spaces more inclusive.

Planning meetings and events

Disability access needs must be considered when organising events and group meetings; access needs are NOT an optional consideration. Consider the access needs of all members when planning meeting and event locations. This includes physical, practical, emotional, economic and temporal considerations:

- Is the space wheelchair accessible?
- Welcoming?
- Low-lighting?
- Bright-lighting?
- Scent-free?
- Is it a space that has free tap water?
- Accessible toilets?
- Is the meeting place quiet or is a quiet room available?
- Is there D/deaf and disabled parking?

- Is there an accessible route from public transport to the venue?
- Is there comfortable seating?
- Can this be reserved?
- Does entry require an ID?
- Are any group reading materials available in alternative formats?
  Which formats?
- Is the facility fitted with a hearing loop system?
- Are sign-language interpreters available on request?
- How long are your meetings?
- What time are they held?
- How far are the meetings from your homes / work places?
- How much does it cost everyone to travel there? Is it possible to create a group fund to facilitate travel for those with low incomes / travel access needs?

Practical considerations for low income or unfunded arts-culture organisations

It can feel intimidating to consider access needs if you are an unfunded / arts-culture group.

The above suggestions present an ideal scenario all organisations claiming disability alliance should aspire to. Please do your best to work toward this non-exhaustive list as diligently as you are able. You may wish to consider the following workarounds that can provide cheap or free accessible solutions to your meetings / events:

- If your arts/ culture organisation is run from an old and inaccessible building, meet or offer events somewhere else!

- Use public spaces, these are often more accessible than private businesses.

- Try local libraries, community centres or public parks. There is often readily available access information on their websites. Do your homework!

- Consider meeting in/ hosting events in grass-roots / activist spaces. These spaces will often be happy to accommodate you if you let them know about your project and your needs.

- Use an access questionnaire to check against when planning. An example is provided as an appendix to this document; if you are unable to meet all access needs immediately, you may consider taking action and sending this out to your members/ audiences prior to organising a meeting or event.

Sharing access information

All access information relating to meetings and events must be easily visible on all flyers, websites, posters, social media posts and event listings. Consider text alternative, easy-read formats and writing in plain English and friendly text size and colour fonts. When posting information on line, please consult and apply good practices listed in the website 'Web Content Accessibility Guidelines'

It is helpful to provide an email address / phone number for those with access questions, but this should not be used instead of clearly sharing access information.

Help D/deaf and disabled individuals know whether they can attend your event or not; don't ask them to do all of the work. It is especially important to include clear access information if your space is NOT fully accessible.

An example of helpful access information:

(example i) *Venue is wheelchair accessible and barrier free. There are accessible toilets in the venue. There is comfortable seating (with backs) that can be reserved in advance. Free tap water is available. The sound levels may be high as this is a public cafe. The nearest public transport is 100m away. The nearest D/deaf and disabled parking space is 20m away. All routes accessible. No ID necessary for entry. Please contact X for more information.*

Image captions should be added to all image-based social media posts.

Think that you have to meet / hold your event in an inaccessible space? Consider whether this is really your only option. Events that claim accessibility and then exclude those with disabilities are hugely problematic.

If this is unavoidable, ensure that the access limitations are clearly marked on all event-related material (social media, flyers, posters, event listings, websites etc.)

(example ii) *There are 5 stairs from the exterior of the building to the meeting space. The stairs are steep and have no railing. No lift is available. There are an additional two stairs leading from the meeting space to the toilets. No D/deaf and disabled toilets available. Contact X for more information (email/ phone number available).*

(example iii) *The event is on the 4th floor of the building with no lift. There are no nearby D/deaf and disabled parking spaces. Public transport is 100m from the venue but the route from station to venue has uneven sidewalks that are very narrow. Contact X for more information (email/ phone number available).*

(example iv) *The event is on the ground level and is wheelchair accessible. There is a ground level toilet but the toilet door width is only 30" so will not accommodate all wheelchairs. Contact X for more information (email/ phone number available).*

Caring Time

It is vital to build caring time into your meetings and events. This could include the following measures:

Hold check-in and check-out rounds to discuss how members/ audiences are feeling and any positive or negative experiences of the meeting / event.

Build time into the meeting schedule for rests, pauses and thinking / processing time. Recognize that everyone process information at different pace!

A practical tip: The length / frequency of these could be decided at the beginning of the meeting according to members' needs.

Decide on the process by which members/ audiences can bring forward issues or suggestions. Will this be done in person? Will your organisation hold a monthly / weekly forum specifically dedicated to these discussions? Can members/ audiences bring up issues anonymously? On-line or face-to-face?

Work as an organisation to create a set of your own guidelines and action plans that ensure the safety and comfort of most, if not all members and audiences.

Creating an inclusive environment

Ensure that members and audiences who are unable to regularly attend meetings/ events are kept up to date with group events, discussions etc. through alternate channels e.g. WhatsApp, email, telephone, voice notes or printed material.

Help these members/ audiences know that they are valued and included despite their non-regular attendance by sending a quick text, email or voicemail to say hello.

Assign a note-taker before all meetings start so that members not in attendance can be kept in the loop.

Consider whether face-to-face meetings are always necessary or whether video / conference calls could be used in addition / as an alternative.

Allow members with access needs to participate in alternative ways if they

want to; ask them what these may be.

Remember that all individuals have different access needs; what works for one D/deaf and disabled person may well not work for someone else, and what worked last week / month / year may not work today, so be sure to keep the channels of communication open.